

Lake Champlain Basin Program

Final Report January 24, 2012

Organization Name: Lake Champlain – Lake George Regional Planning Board

Project Name: Lake George Onsite Septic Improvement Program

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Executive Summary:

The Lake George Onsite Septic Improvement Program focused on the issues associated with of nearshore septic system on Lake George through an incentivized septic pump-out and system assessment process. High priority, nearshore, residential communities were targeted along the western shoreline of Lake George in Warren County and included the Towns of; Lake George/Diamond Point, Bolton Landing, and Silver Bay/Hague. The goal of this program was to make homeowners aware of their septic system and give them the guidance and knowledge to properly maintain their systems. Over 400 homeowners with homes within 500 feet of Lake George were sent participation letters for inclusion in the program, which included a cost-shared septic system pump-out and tank inspection, a water conservation kit for each home, and on-site discussion and educational materials about septic systems. Pump-outs were scheduled by the Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board staff throughout the 2011 summer season, and home education and tank inspections were performed by staff of the Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Lake George Association. A total of 56 individual homes and two community systems participated in the program. Overall, 88,000 gallons of septic effluent was removed and over 150 homeowners were educated on proper septic system maintenance. The small amount of minor issues that were discovered during the inspections were immediately remediated at the cost of the homeowners, and all were pleased to know where and how their systems are functioning. A final location map of all participants has been produced so new target areas for future programs can be identified.

Project Introduction:

The majority of the population living in the nearshore area of Lake George is not serviced by municipal sewer. Failing septic systems can have a detrimental effect on the quality of water in Lake George, both as a source of nutrients and fecal bacteria. Experience has shown that the majority of homeowners are not aware of the potential dangers that their onsite wastewater systems can pose, and many do not even know where their systems are located. Proper septic tank maintenance is an

issue that is usually not thought of until there is a major problem and water or soil contamination has already occurred. Because of this, it is extremely important that homeowners are made aware of the issues associated with their onsite systems and given a program that will help them not only evaluate their septic system in the short term, but give them the tools and knowledge for long term maintenance.

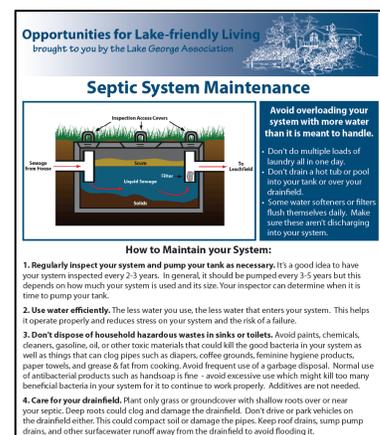
The Lake George Onsite Septic Improvement Program is a comprehensive onsite wastewater program that includes system inspections, cost-shared system pump-outs, a water conservation program and a septic and water quality educational program. The program was achieved through a partnership between the Lake Champlain – Lake George Regional Planning Board (LCLGRP), the Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the Lake George Association (LGA).

Three target areas along the western shoreline of Lake George; Lake George/Diamond Point, Bolton Landing and Silver Bay/Hague, have previously been identified as high potential areas for issues with leaking and failing septic systems. As a result, these areas were chosen for inclusion in the Lake George Onsite Septic Improvement Program. The LGA produced a GIS map of the land parcels that are within 500 ft. of lake and generated a mailing list for marketing and awareness of the program. Over 400 homeowners were offered a 50% discounted septic system pump-out rate, and a goal of 100 homeowners was set. Certified NYS Onsite Wastewater Program staff from the Warren County SWCD was present at all pump-out sites and performed visual inspections of the tank and baffle system, and looked for evidence of septic failure. During the visit, the homeowners were educated by SWCD and LGA staff on proper septic system maintenance, the impacts of non-maintained systems and be given a water conservation kit for their home consisting of a low-flow toilet bag, low-flow showerhead and a low-flow faucet aerator. Each homeowner also received Cornell Cooperative Extensions publication FS1 “Your Septic System” along with onsite septic system contact information.

In the Publication *Lake George, Planning For the Future* it is stated that “non-point source pollution continues to be the greatest threat to water quality in Lake George, emanating from a host of sources, most notably: septic disposal systems...” The Lake George Onsite Septic Improvement Pump-out Program has benefited all who live on and visit Lake George by eliminating possible sources of water contamination that can be damaging to human health and lake aesthetics.

Tasks Completed:

The three towns in Warren County along the west side of Lake George; the Town of Lake George (including Diamond Point), the Town of Bolton and the Town of Hague (including Silver Bay) were identified as target areas for this septic pump-out program. The GIS Specialist at the LGA used county parcel data to identify land parcels within those towns that are within 500 feet of Lake George and not serviced by municipal sewers. Once the parcels were identified, mailing addresses for individual homes were obtained from the data and over 400 participation letters were sent by the Project Coordinator. Included in the mailing was a flyer created by the LGA Education Coordinator about the importance of septic system maintenance as well as a pre-postage postcard for homeowners who



were interested in the program to send back.



Also sent out were requests for quotes to ten local septic haulers and the LCLGRP B contracted with the lowest bidder, Hometown Sewer Service of Warrensburg, NY. The pump-out rate obtained was \$160.50 per 1,000 gallon tank, with half of the cost paid through this grant program. The Project Coordinator also produced and ordered all the educational materials.

Pump-outs were scheduled by the Project Coordinator and performed at homes on Thursdays and Fridays from June to September 2011. Staff from the Warren County SWCD and the LGA, as well as the Project Coordinator, attended the pump-outs to provide the homeowners with a complimentary water conservation kit, consisting of a low-flow toilet bag, low-flow showerhead and a low-flow faucet aerator. Homeowners also received Cornell Cooperative Extensions FS1

publication “Your Septic System,” and a refrigerator magnet indicating what not to put in a septic system. Water conservation kits and educational materials were also provided to several homeowners that had recently had their septic tanks pumped, but were still interested in the educational aspect of the program. Once all the pump-outs were complete, the GIS Specialist at the LGA produced a final map of all the pump-out locations (Maps 1 – 4, attached). This information will be used to identify areas where further septic system educational programs should be performed.



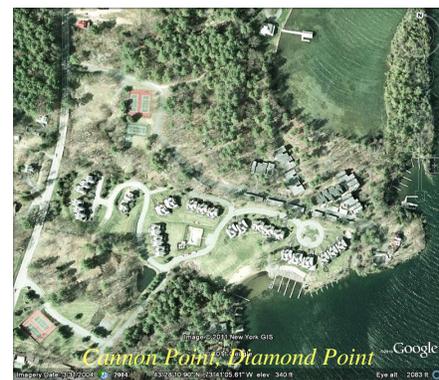
Deliverables Completed:

March 2011 – List of participant addresses produced and homeowners invited to participate in the program.

April 2011 – Project Coordinator released a Request for Quotes to 10 local septic haulers and contracted with Hometown Sewer Service. Project Coordinator also obtained all the educational materials for the program.

May – September 2011 – Project Coordinator scheduled pump-outs

June to September 2011 – 56 individual homes and two communal systems, Cannon Point in Diamond Point (48 homes) and Bluebird Cottages Homeowners Association in Bolton Landing (10 homes), were pumped-out through this program. Collectively, 88,000 gallons of septic effluent was removed and properly disposed of, and all tanks were checked



for structural integrity. A few small issues were found with some of the tanks, but all were taken care of immediately by the homeowner at their expense.

Over 150 homeowners were educated on the effects of improper septic system maintenance, and the importance of this issue on Lake George, during presentations given to local Homeowner's Associations, the LGA Lake Friendly Living Expo and also during the pump-outs.

Conclusions:

This program was very well received in Lake George and future funding to continue an Onsite Septic Improvement Program would benefit any lake and riverfront properties. The one-on-one education provided to homeowners delivers valuable information and has changed many views on septic system maintenance. This program has also made homeowners aware of the effects they have on their water quality. Should future funding become available, this is a program that can and should be expanded throughout the Champlain Basin.

Appended Documents:

[please attach any articles, press releases, or published documents pertaining to the project]

Photos: Email or mail a CD to your Project Officer with any photo documentation you have of your project with proper photo credit that LCBP can use in future publications.